

Joshua 24 - Thursday, August 16th, 2012

(1) Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God.

- Whereas chapter twenty-three Joshua addresses the leaders of Israel, in chapter twenty-four Joshua addresses the entire nation of Israel.
- Joshua gets right down to business in this his final words prior to his death at the ripe old age of 110 years, and he's stricken in years.
- He just gets down to the bottom line, and as we're about to see, he's going to sort of give them a history lesson in order to teach them.

Charles Spurgeon – “Joshua was moved to speak in the name of the Lord, and remind the people of what had been done for them. Having recapitulated the wonders of Egypt and the wilderness, he mentions the Lord's goodness to them in Canaan.”

(2) And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Your fathers, *including* Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. (3) Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. (4) To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. (5) Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterward I brought you out. (6) 'Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. (7) So they cried out to the LORD; and He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, brought the sea upon them, and covered them. And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time. (8) And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan, and they fought with you. But I gave them into your hand, that you might possess their land, and I destroyed them from before you. (9) Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose to make war against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. (10) But I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he continued to bless you. So I delivered you out of his hand. (11) Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you—*also* the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I delivered them into your hand. (12) I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, *also* the two kings of the Amorites, *but* not with your sword or with your bow. (13) I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'

- Notice how many times we have the word “I” in the narrative. Actually, if my math is right, I counted a total of seventeen times God says I.
- You kind of get the impression that God is wanting them to know that He's the one that did all of this for the children of Israel and not them.
- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the best things we can do as believers it would have to be reflecting on all God has done.

- I find it interesting that God would say how He used Hornets to drive the enemy's out. There are those who would suggest this is symbolic.
- However, I believe that this is literal, in that God Who is in the supernatural can use the natural to accomplish His purpose in our lives.

Charles Spurgeon – “God can make insects to be more terrible than men-at-arms, and He did so in this case. Israel fought, but her victories were due to a higher arm. After all we can do, our salvation is still of the Lord alone.”

(14) "Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!

- Here, after reminding them of all God did, Joshua rounds a corner in the sense that he begins with his exhortation of the children of Israel.
- He starts by exhorting them to fear the Lord and serve Him sincerely and in truth by putting away the gods, which their fathers had served.
- Couple of interesting thoughts, the first of which is, this would indicate Joshua knew that they had these gods already in their possession.

- Secondly, there's a most important principle woven into the fabric of this verse, and it's one for which we would do well to take heed of.
- What I'm speaking of is the order of our service to God being in response to that which we have been the recipient of from the hand of God.
- In other words, it's not the other way around. We don't serve God and then hope that He will respond by doing all that we want Him to do.

(15) And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

- While this particular verse is a well-known one, in it's proper context, it makes sense by virtue of how the Israelites would have to choose.
- They would either serve their false gods that they had in their tents, or they were to come clean and serve the Lord in sincerity and truth.
- So too is this true for us. We have to serve one or the other. Either we'll serve the true and living God, or we by default serve other gods.

Charles Spurgeon - “Every man must have a god, the question was, who should be their god? Joshua declares that Jehovah alone should be God to him and to his household. We cannot serve two gods, and it will be a happy thing if in our house we never attempt it, but once for all choose the Lord alone to be our God. May divine grace so direct us.”

(16) So the people answered and said: "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; (17) for the LORD our God *is* He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed. (18) And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He *is* our God." (19) But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD, for He *is* a holy God. He *is* a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. (20) If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good."

- I find it interesting how that Joshua would say to them that they "cannot" serve the Lord. Why would he say that, and what does he mean?
- I would suggest that he is echoing what Jesus would say many generations later in the New Testament recorded in Matthew chapter six.
- More specifically, that you cannot serve two Gods. It's either one or the other, which means that it is an impossibility to serve both.

Matthew 6:24 NKJV "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

(21) And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD!" (22) So Joshua said to the people, "You *are* witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD for yourselves, to serve Him." And they said, "*We are* witnesses!" (23) "Now therefore," *he said*, "put away the foreign gods which *are* among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel."

- This is why we know they had false gods in the form of idols in their tents. Notice that Joshua says these gods are among them presently.
- This begs the question of how Joshua would have known that they were secretly worshiping these idols that were hidden in their tents.
- I'm of the belief that Joshua knew the children of Israel well enough because he witnessed first hand their half-hearted worship of the Lord

(24) And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!" (25) So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. (26) Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that *was* by the sanctuary of the LORD. (27) And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God." (28) So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance.

- The reason Joshua goes from exhorting them to rebuking them is because Israel will do exactly what Joshua is warning them not to do.

(29) Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* one hundred and ten years old. (30) And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which *is* in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. (31) Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

- So, now we come to the end of Joshua's life, and what a life it was. I have to confess to you that I am really going to miss Joshua.
- The reason I say that is because Joshua was the book that God used mightily in my life when we made the decision to move to Hawaii.
- It was the unflinching fearlessness and unwavering courage that Joshua had that God used to encourage me to step out in faith.

(32) The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph. (33) And Eleazar the son of Aaron died. They buried him in a hill *belonging to* Phinehas his son, which was given to him in the mountains of Ephraim.

- If it seems a little odd and out of place that we're told of Joseph's bones being buried, that's because it's a little odd and out of place.
- Actually, as out of place as this may seem, it's a testimony to both the promise made to Joseph, and the faith of Joseph.
- Namely, that Joseph knew, by faith, they would make it into the Promised Land, which is why he is again mentioned in the hall of faith.

Hebrews 11:22 NKJV By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.